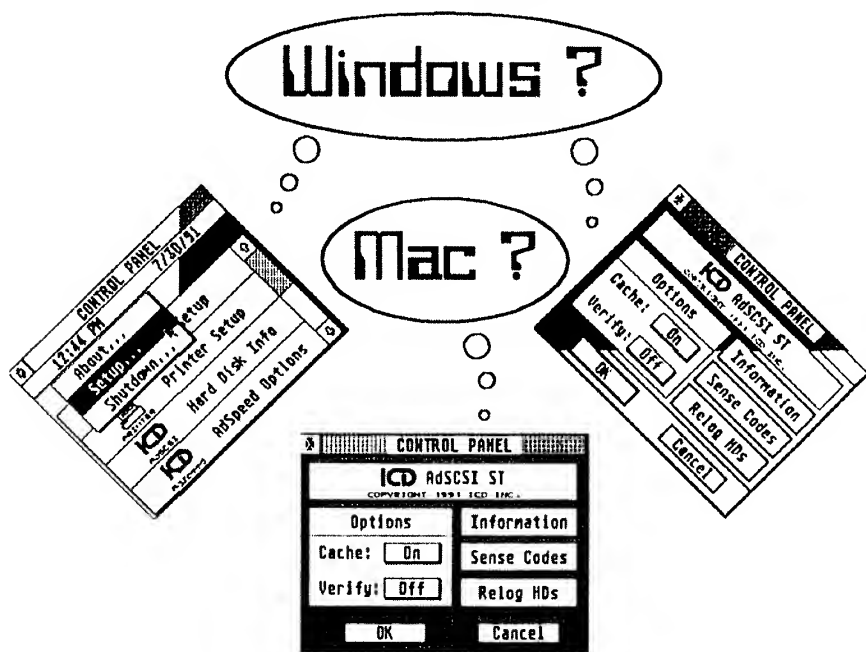

N_{orthern} O_{hio} A_{tari} H_{elpers}

NewsNotes



Nope...

ATARI !!

*Description & Review of the new
ATARI Control Panel Extension Accessory
Inside this month...*

NewsNotes Staff:

Kevin Steele
(216) 582-2196

Doug Novak
(216) 845-6260

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N.O.A.H. News

I feel like I should introduce myself since it's been a while since we've 'talked'. The last issue was the March issue and since then all of us have had so many things going on that whether we liked it or not, time to write and compile this publication took a really low priority. Sorry about that but it couldn't be helped. If we then throw in the fact that summer really takes away from time spent inside on computers you may understand where we are coming from.

Lots of things have happened since then, the most important of course was our successful Gulf War. War is always a last resort but thank the powers that be that the casualties were kept at a minimum and our men and women are home safe once again. All politics aside, I believe the right decision was made, or made for us, by a true 'asshole' in the persona of Saddam Hussain. Not wanting to sound bloodthirsty or anything, I still wish we no longer had to deal with him in one way or another.

Enough politics. The STE has been selling well and the European software and magazines are still flying out of the store. Now if there was just a way to wake up Atari and let them know that the US is a viable market things might change real quick.

All of our writers are back in the fold for this issue, Kevin, Rick and the rest. As usual, we always welcome anyone with the urge to put together a review or comment and let us include it in this publication. With fall just around the corner, sure, we will all start heading back indoors once again so that we can go from unbearable heat to 'cabin fever' once again. I did spend a little time relaxing with the ST this summer and most of that was playing Lemmings. If you have not seen this one, doubtful, give it a look. One of the most playable, unique and addictive game to come along in quite a while. PageStream 2.1 also hit and what a great upgrade that turned out to be! Look for Kevin's review next month. Also new on the scene is a new magazine for the ST put out here in the states called Atari User. This one looks pretty good and is available at A A A 'free' of charge. Across the waters, ST World has started publishing every month again. This one contained a lot of product reviews and hands on experience articles that are quite interesting. Why they ceased for a while then went quarterly I have no idea but they are back monthly. Let's hope it stays that way.

One of the hottest new ST titles in the last couple of weeks is RBI 2 Baseball from Domark. It allows you the choice of any of the 26 teams all of which have 24 players. This one has a camera view that follows the ball and the players around the diamond. Also included are instant replays and a lot of close-up shots.

Rumor has it that Gauntlet III from U.S. Gold is close to the finish line and

Midwinter II

Flames Of Freedom

From:
Microprose

Review by: Rick Gridley

Over a year ago Microprose released Midwinter for the Atari ST/STE line of computers. At the time, this game was declared "The Strategy Game of the Decade."

Midwinter II takes place a number of years later after the events in the first game. The island of Midwinter has sunk beneath the waves of the Atlantic Ocean as the Earth starts warming from the "nuclear winter" of the first game. The people of Midwinter have formed an alliance with the people of the island of Agora and population to Agora. Between Agora and the African mainland, the Saharian Empire, lie the control of the evil 42 islands all under Saharain Empire. Agora knows that the Saharians expected to begin within six months to a year. You are the secret operative of the Agorian Government and your tasks are to liberate as many of the 42 islands you can before the invasion starts. The more islands you can liberate, the easier time you will have stopping the Saharian hoards.



There are many more means of transportation available to you in this game than there were in the last. Over 22 types of transport, in the air, on land, on and under the sea. From the HQ screen you can practice each of the transportation modes. My favorites are the speedboats and the flying sub although I find that the a trusty old jeep can zip you across most any land terrain and tackle any other vehicle including tanks in combat. Most vehicles are equipped with homing missiles that zero in on their targets, but make sure that you do not accidentally kill the person you were supposed to contact to get information about the next goal in your current mission! Helicopters, balloons, zeppelins, seaplanes, trucks, subs... the list goes on and on. You will also come across numerous hand weapons from knives up to and including shoulder mounted rocket launchers.

Besides practicing driving each vehicle, the training room at HQ will give one the option of dropping right into the thick of a firefight to practice your combat skills. Strategic practice on the main island maps as well as practice in escaping from the secret police are also options in this room. You also can pick any one of the 42 islands and do a raid to practice one complete mission. The entire campaign game ties in all these various training aspects into one monster

any one of the 42 islands and do a raid to practice one complete mission. The entire campaign game ties in all these various training aspects into one monster of a gaming session. Expect to spend many nights and days to complete an entire campaign.

Unlike Midwinter which had you controlling more and more characters as the game went on, Midwinter II leaves you in control of one character, your persona! There is room at the HQ where you can customize your character to look like yourself (or close to it) or what you would like to look like, be it bald, black, female, blond, glasses, eyepatch etc. This 'custom' look is really a neat feature and if you go wild you can look like a hippie or a yuppie, the choice is yours. Your character has many attributes that increase with time during gameplay. If your sex appeal is high you may be able to seduce a member of the opposite sex into helping you whether it be escaping from the secret police or locating that secret base you have been looking for. You can also play the tough guy and threaten people into giving help in your various missions. It's all up to you.

The graphics in the 3-D mode resemble those of Midwinter except that you will see sandy beaches, snowcapped mountains, rolling waves, grassy plains, roads and other features of the island. The sound is just outstanding. As you travel on foot you will hear birds chirping during the day and at night you will hear crickets calling their songs of insect seduction. Along the coastlines the sound of the waves crashing into the shore fill the air. Each vehicle makes it's own 'motor' sound as well. The sky changes color as the day moves into night and back again as night moves into day. Very nice!

The various information screens are called up by a push of one of the function keys and here is one of my major nitpicks of Midwinter II. The loading of these information off a floppy drive can take up to 45 seconds and at times it seems like an eternity. Things move quite fast when you are moving and fighting in the 3-D mode but really slow down when you call up the map or stat screens.

Eventually the invasion will start and depending on how many and which islands you liberate, the Armada will wind its way through the islands with your home of Agora as its main target. If you have done a good job on the various missions you will face a much weaker Armada but if only a few islands were liberated you will find that the Armada is almost unstoppable. This is where you've really got to move fast. The vehicles you find on the various islands will help you in your combat against the Armada. If you play your cards right by liberating specific islands, you may be able to channel the Armada into a trap where you can do some serious damage to it. No one strategy is correct in the liberation of islands and each game will be different.

I have not even touched on the character interaction of the game. During your liberation missions you will come across a cast selected from over 1,000 characters. These people can help you by giving you information, doing actual demolition of strategic sites on the island, assigned certain other characters or turn traitor and turn you into the secret police. Some will give you a vehicle and ID papers others may give you first aid or a hand weapon or even give you another mini mission to complete before they will give you any secret information. Time is of the essence here. The faster you liberate one island the

more time you will have to liberate others before the Armada sets sail. As you wipe out various enemy units while liberating islands you will be rewarded with cash bonuses and once an island is liberated it's happy citizens may bestow a secret weapon upon you which can come in handy in the liberation of other islands or in combat with the Armada once it sets sail.

I could go on and on about this game. The screen loads are slow when you call up the information screens... again my main complaint. The game comes on three disks that you cannot put onto your hard drive but the game has a utility that will allow you to make a back-up of all three disks. The instruction manual is laid out very well and is over 180 pages long but full of illustrations and pictures. There is a small story book as well and a function key card in the game.

Another winner from Microprose, who, through their European office continue to support the ST/STE line of computers from Atari. Look for **RAILROAD TYCOON**, **F-15 STRIKE EAGLE II**, **SILENT SERVICE II**, **LIGHTSPEED** and **COVERT ACTION** all by the end of the year from Microprose. As long as they continue to support the ST/STE I urge you to support them.

Till next time...
Rick Gridley

Exposé

A Desk Accessory for Desktop Publishers

Review by Kevin Steele

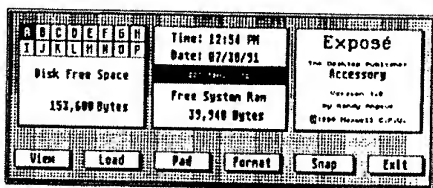
Version Reviewed: 1.0

Every so often a piece of utility software comes along that seems to have been born from a user discovering a weakness in their current software, then saying to themselves "Wouldn't it be great if you could...". Exposé, from Maxwell CPU, is a good example of one of these "Necessity is the Mother of Invention" type of utilities. Billed as a desk accessory for desktop publishers and graphic artists, Exposé is a multi-function DA that includes a number of unique features designed to meet the needs of this group of users.

The Main Menu

As stated above, Exposé is a multi-featured desk accessory, combining a number of desktop-publishing and graphic functions into just one DA slot. Clicking on Exposé reveals the main menu, from which you can jump into its many features.

There are buttons to load and view graphics files, enter text into a 'notepad', format disks, set the time and date, and even take a screen 'snapshot'. Plus, you can jump directly into any one of these features when accessing Exposé by holding down the right combination of control keys. There are also a number of informational displays, such as the amount of free RAM available, (cont.13)

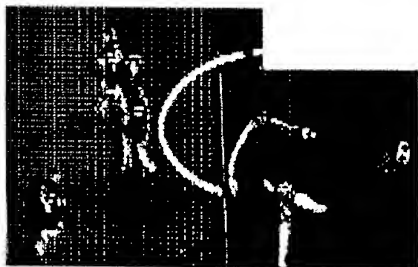


LYNX GAMES

Coming in 1991 (?)

NFL FOOTBALL

Catch the pass, and run up the sideline for a touchdown! As many as 4 players can pick teams from a list of official NFL organizations! Excellent scaling of the field as well as digitized voices calling the plays.



WORLD CLASS SOCCER

An original soccer game from Atari featuring a scaling field that zooms in where the action is. You have to be fast and furious to kick the ball past the goalie. One to four players can challenge the best in World Class Soccer!

WARBIRDS

An original flight simulation from Atari. In Warbird up to six players can test their skills in some of the most intense dogfights ever! Excellent scaling and use of polygon graphics give multiple perspectives and duplicate the feel of true flight.

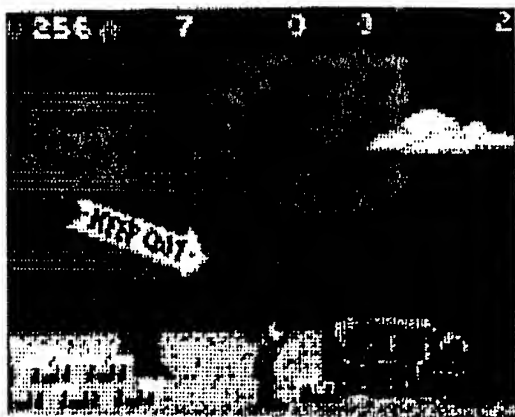


HYDRA

Based on the recent arcade smash from Atari, this translation is still in the early stages, but looks like it'll be a hot one. Safely transport the cargo back to headquarters in your combination boat/jet plane. Blast the enemy ships with power-ups

gained along the way.

(continued page 9)

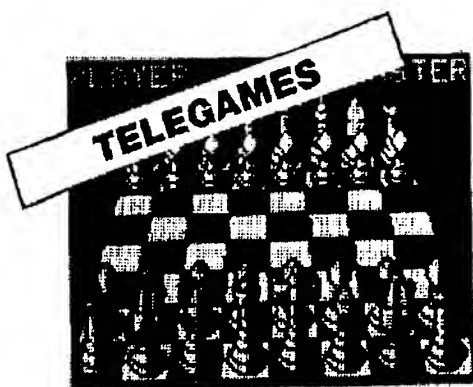


SCRAPYARD DOG

This Atari original is still in the early stages, but promises to have lots of hidden secrets and plenty of action. Expanded from the 7800 version, Dog is a great adventure!

GOLF

Go for a hole in one! Pick your challenge from 18 of the hottest courses around. Choose your club, adjust your stance, check the wind, and control your swing. An extremely detailed and realistic first person golf game.



FIDELITY ULTIMATE CHESS

Capture the timeless strategy of chess in this detailed simulation from Telegames. Challenge the computer for solo play or compete against a friend in either 2-D or 3-D mode.

FREE-NET CONNECTION

(The best news from the Cleveland Free-Net Atari SIG every month.)

The Jukebox

by: Klaus Pedersen (micro@imada.ou.dk)

REVIEW by Doug Wokoun (aa384@cleveland.Freenet.Edu)

Computer music is nothing new. We've all listened to our share of square waves and bleep tones over the years, and even though sound chips continue to advance and generate more voices with more waveforms, etc., it is still largely the same sterile drone. Years ago, digitized sound appeared. This involves plugging a sound source into the computer and rapidly 'sampling' the signal level. In this way, a digital representation of the sound was produced, which was played by reading the sampled data and coaxing the computer's sound chip into generating the original signal (or something approximate). Digitized sound has two major drawbacks: it requires a lot of memory and it requires a lot of CPU time to play back samples, especially high quality ones. On a 512K system, the entire memory can be consumed in _seconds_, often relegating digitized sound to brief sound effects in games.

A while back, a product appeared for the Amiga that has given digitized sound new life. It's called Sound Tracker and it has spawned a series of impressive public domain and shareware programs for the for the Atari to create, edit, and play its music files, called modules. Sound Tracker takes the same approach to sound generation that many keyboards do: it holds a copy of the digital representation of an instrument sound in memory, and manipulates the sound to alter its pitch and volume to generate the whole range of instrument sounds. The music writer simply gives the computer a series of notes and the computer repeats the sample as many times as necessary, each time making adjustments the pitch to match the given note. The computer then combines the note with other notes. Up to four notes can be played simultaneously and in stereo. In short, it sounds like synthesizer music. Because only one sample is needed for each instrument sound, relatively little memory is needed to define an entire song. A five minute song can be compressed to around 200K with Sound Tracker, instead of megabytes with straight sampling.

When the STe became available last year, one of its highly

publicized features was its DMA stereo sound capability. Instead of the CPU processing the data for output, the new chips do that independently of the CPU. This frees the CPU to do other things, such as turn Sound Tracker modules into digital samples for output. This is what the Jukebox does.

The Jukebox is an exciting new desk accessory from Klaus Pedersen that will play Sound Tracker modules on any Atari with DMA sound (STe, Mega STe, TT). Not only this, but it does it in the background, meaning you can word process, telecompute, or blast while listening to your favorite tune. It can use all of the STe's sampling rates, up to 50 KHz, rivaling some CD players, however, to use it at that rate, you will need a computer running faster than 8Mhz, otherwise, it won't process quickly enough. At 12.5Mhz, the program delivers very good sound, taking up roughly 40% of the system time of an 8Mhz machine, according to Quick Index 1.8. Disk access goes at near normal speed and screen updates are a little more sluggish, but it is still very usable. Even though it runs in the background, the sound quality is very high. In fact, it is the best 'mod' player I have seen yet.

The Jukebox has a number of useful control features. The tempo of the music can be adjusted within a wide range. Even the pitch can be adjusted. It also contains a track editor, so you can change the layout of the song. The program seems to have a stereo option, but it is unavailable on my machine. Perhaps this is waiting for a future upgrade. If you have a faster machine, you can increase the sound quality further by enabling Interpolate mode. Modules can be held semi-permanently in memory (so you can run programs while playing the sound) or temporarily. All of these functions are accessed by drop down windows inside the desk accessory box.

The program appears to be fairly bug free and I've had no conflicts with other programs. The accessory itself is less than 20K on disk, however, loading large modules will take up significantly more memory in the computer.

I have been using the Jukebox extensively since the day I got it. It's a really fun program and an interesting conversation piece. It's one that I certainly would demo if I were showing the machine to someone Atari could probably sell a lot of STe by showing this program!

A A A Video Repair And Computers

European ST Mags
\$8.95

AtariUser Mags
FREE !

Stereo Monitor
\$279.95

1040 STE
\$399.00

Joysticks From
\$8.95

Printer Stands
\$9.95

Disk Storage Boxes
4!\$14.95

ST Software From
\$5.00

the time and date, and a selection of drive buttons which will display the amount of space available on that drive. You can also call up the file selector by clicking on the Exposé title, a useful feature if you own an alternative file selector like UIS III.

Loading and Viewing Graphics

The first two buttons on the main menu, 'View' and 'Load', are used to view graphic files. Exposé supports a number of graphics formats, including Degas, Tiny, IMG, Neochrome, Macpaint, and even GEM metafiles. The graphics are shown on screen in a standard GEM window, which can be moved or resized as needed. There's no option for resizing the graphic, however - it is always shown at normal size.

While viewing a picture, you can edit the graphic with Exposé's limited graphic tools. There are six different pen sizes, and you can select any of the available colors (2 in mono, 4 in medium rez) to draw with. There's even an UNDO feature, but this isn't pointed out in the manual. Once you're done touching-up a graphic, you can save it as either an IMG or Degas-format file. There's even a clip feature allowing you to save just a portion of the graphic.

One of Exposé's strengths is the unique ability to load and display GEM metafiles. In fact, it is especially handy to be able to view a GEM metafile and then save the on-screen representation as a Degas or IMG file, in essence converting a metafile to a bit-mapped graphic.

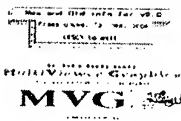
There are some notable weaknesses in the graphics portion of Exposé, however. First, the desk accessory is limited to IMG files no greater than about 52-55k - any larger and Exposé can't load it. While I understand the desire to keep memory requirements low (the desk accessory already gobbles up 150k of precious RAM), I have a lot of IMG files larger than 52k. This limitation is not mentioned in the documentation.

Next, very tall IMG files seem to get cropped. For example, I imported a graphic of what, in Exposé, appeared to be a tall hat. When the same graphic is loaded into PageStream, however, I discovered that there was a head attached to the hat as well! If I had relied on Exposé alone to preview the graphic, I would have been in for quite a surprise when I printed my publication.

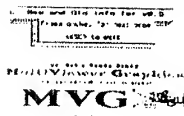
Also, GEM metafiles aren't always shown with the correct aspect ratio - they sometimes appear 'squeezed' when displayed. Exposé's version of some GEM files looks 'scrunched' vertically, and text within the metafile isn't displayed. I have not found this to be a universal problem among GEM files, but it did happen often enough for me to classify it as a major annoyance.

Finally, Exposé's insistence on displaying every file at full size is aggravating. With large graphics, you can only see a portion of it on the monitor, and must use the scroll bars to move around the picture. An option to show a graphic at 75% or 50% would have been nice. GEM files are seemingly sized arbitrarily, with some large graphics being sized rather small, taking up only an minute corner of the available window space, while other small files are shown at full size.

(Next Month: *The Notepad*)



MVG 2.00



Review by Kevin Steele

Version Reviewed: MVG 2.00w

MVG is a graphics editor with a difference. A strange, bemusing, unusual difference - if there was ever such a thing as a top 10 list of software with an attitude, then MVG would deserve first place. It managed to do something almost no other productivity software has ever intentionally tried to do: it made me laugh. Don't get me wrong, this package really performs - it just reflects the tastes of its author a bit more than most.

From the "What be MVG" menu entry to the exit dialog box (where you can select "Yes", "No", and "Unsure" buttons in the "Exit?" dialog), author Robert Parks (call him "Dr. Bob") exhibits a unique and playful attitude in his software. Normally, excessive "cuteness" in a software package will sour me to it immediately, but MVG is such a powerful tool that the tongue-in-cheek cheesiness comes across more as a "why do it if you can't have fun at the same time" statement than a feeble attempt to cover up a program's faults with cuddly icons.

Under the Hood

To get started with MVG, you need 1 meg of memory, a monochrome monitor (standard 640x400 or 1280x960 high-res), and a Epson-compatible dot matrix or HP Deskjet/Laserjet if you wish to print pictures from within MVG. The program can be run from a floppy drive, a surprising and nice feature in these days of ever larger "monster" application packages.

Once MVG is loaded, you are presented with an immediate example of the "cuteness" factor present in the program - the opening screen is filled with a drawing of strange, camel-like creatures. But don't let the screen throw you, as there is a powerful graphics editing system hidden behind the cute front door.

MVG was obviously written by someone who actually uses the program - the entire design reflects a 'lean and mean' efficiency of design. There are keyboard equivalents for almost everything, including convenient single-key equivalents for the most-often used features in MVG, such as "T" for text, "B" for box, and so forth. The program can load and save graphics in a wide array of graphics formats, including IMG, Degas, MacPaint, and Neochrome. Plus, through the "Modules" menu (which will be described later), you can even load sub-programs to support other graphic formats or to add new features to MVG. If there was ever a graphics-editing program designed to grow with your needs, this is it.

Speed, Speed, Speed

My first impression on the actual performance of MVG was of blistering, unadulterated speed. This program does almost everything fast - the graphic tools kept up to fast mouse movements, and even such normally sluggish tools as the fill tool were zippy.

MVG doesn't seem hampered by the size of the graphic, either, as it can support graphic resolutions up to 32,767 x 32,767! Large graphic files cannot be shown at full size on a normal monochrome screen for obvious reasons, but MVG (in addition to providing a "show full image" option) has thoughtfully provided a number of methods for moving around the screen.

First a nifty device called the "Easy Scroller". Pressing the spacebar will bring up this dialog box, which shows a black box (which represents the viewable area) inside a larger white box (representing the size of the currently loaded graphic). You can click-and-drag the black box within the white box to the area of the graphic you wish to view. Quick, easy, and painless.

If you don't like having a dialog box pop up and clutter your view, you can configure MVG to use a second "Easy Scroller" technique. This time, pressing the space bar turns the mouse pointer into the "hand" shape, whereupon you can simply "grab" the screen and drag it to the position you want.

In either case, you need a method for fine-scrolling, and MVG once again provides. The arrow keys not only scroll the image, but the ST's numeric keypad is set to mimic the IBM's numeric keypad, with such keys as "Home", "End", "Page Up", and "Page Down". If you've ever worked on an IBM system, this setup is very comfortable and efficient.

Into the Toolbox

A graphics editor is only as good as the editing tools it packs. MVG packs quite a lot. In addition to the now-obligatory line, draw, box, circle, and fill tools normally associated with graphic programs, MVG adds two different drawing modes, an enormously powerful clipping tool, two separate clipboards, and the ability to use custom fonts.

MVG is billed primarily as a graphics "editor", and as such does not include some of the more sophisticated graphic drawing tools such as bezier curves, nor does it include an enormous variety of pen sizes or fill patterns. If you're looking for a really sophisticated program to create graphics from scratch, you might want to take a look at other programs on the market.

As a graphics editor, however, MVG shines. First off, there are two graphics modes supported: a normal editing mode (called "Skinny Bits"), and a close-up editor mode (called "Fat Bits"). The skinny bits editor takes an unusual and creative approach to providing you easy access to your graphic tools without interfering with your view of the graphic being edited. Instead of adding a vertical tool box to the screen, the menu bar is transformed into a tool bar, offering you the normal battery of graphics tools, including a air-brush tool.

There is an undo option, but for some reason the Undo key doesn't work - you must click on the "Oops" button on the top tool bar.

The fat bits editor allows you to "zoom-in" on one section of your graphic for fine-detail editing. There are limited tools available, just a pen for drawing and two box tools. There is a small window in the fat bits toolbox showing an actual-size view of the area being edited, and you can scroll the editing window with the numeric keypad.

One of the best features of MVG is its powerful clipping tool. In fact, one entire menu (the "Boxxer" menu) is devoted exclusively to clipping tool features. There two main clipping techniques: the clip box, and the scalpel. The clip box is similar to the clip box feature found in most graphics programs - you can cut or copy a box-shaped section of a graphic by defining the upper left-hand and lower right-hand corners of the area to be cut. Once you've defined a clipping area, you are presented with a clip control box. From there you can adjust the area to be clipped and even export the defined area to a file. Once you're happy with the area to be clipped, you can cut or copy.

The scalpel is similar to the "knife" feature of NeoChrome, but not entirely the same. You can use the scalpel to cut out an irregularly-shaped section of the current graphic. Whereas you 'drew' the area to be cut with NeoChrome's knife tool, with MVG's scalpel you define a polygon outline by clicking at key spots around the area you wish to cut. Both methods have their advantages, but I have to admit I prefer NeoChrome's method.

Once you've used the clip box or scalpel to cut or copy an image area, you are given several different paste modes to choose from. "Replace" mode pastes the entire clip over the existing graphic, including white space. "Transparent" mode only pastes the black parts of the clip over the existing graphic. "Object" mode eliminates any white space around the outside of the image in the clip box, while leaving the white space inside the object alone.

There are two "clipboards" available in MVG, where you can load a degas image into and clip from or to. There's even a screen snapshot feature that transfers the current screen image directly into one of the clipboards.

Image Controls and Add-Ons

MVG not only allows you to edit the individual pixels of a graphic image, it also provides you with a number of tools for adjusting the entire image itself. Some of these are internal tools, others are special sub-programs loaded through the special "modules" menu.

MVG allows you to resize a graphic by percentage or by setting the desired pixel size. You can also crop an image to a specific size. There are even dithering and half-toning control tools available.

The "modules" concept is a nice one, allowing you to add new features to MVG by simply adding a "module". There is room for up to eight modules in the menu, plus a "dispatch" option to allow you to load other modules from disk.

Several modules are included with MVG, including a module to allow printing graphics on the SLM804 printer. Other modules are available separately, including programs to interface MVG with scanners, combine multiple graphics on screen, rotate clips in single-degree increments, and much more.

In Conclusion

As a graphics editing tool, MVG is both simple to use and powerful, a rare combination. It has a large number of configuration options allowing you to adjust MVG's manner of operation to suit your own work style. In fact, MVG seems built around the concept of ease-of-use.

The quirky sense of humor so evident in the program even runs throughout the well-written manual, throwing in such things as a velocity conversion table (from Furloughs-per-fortnight). The sense of humor does not, however, get in the way of find the information you need to know in order to use the program to its fullest.

There are a whole host of features I've been unable to mention in the space of this review, but rest assured that MVG is indeed a powerful solution for graphics editing, and the price is more than reasonable for the features offered. For serious graphic artists, another program may better serve your needs. For desktop publishers and the like (who primarily just need to convert or touch-up images), MVG is just the ticket.

MVG 2.00w

Retail Price \$59.95

WizWorks!

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The logo for Steele Writing Services features a large, bold, black letter 'S' on the left. To its right, the word 'STEELE' is written in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font. The 'S' and 'STEELE' are connected, forming a single graphic element.

WRITING SERVICES

Kevin B. Steele
12493 Kingston Way
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(216) 582-2196

CPX (?)

Revised by:

Kevin Steele

Atari's New XCONTROL Extensible Control Panel: Now You Can Control It All!

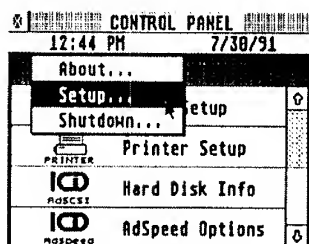
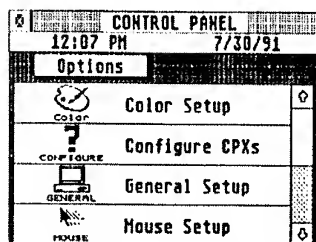
If you've ever worked with a Macintosh, chances are you were impressed by the Mac's control panel. Its features can be expanded by simply adding a small module (called a CDEV) into the Mac's system folder (similar to the AUTO folder). Each of these CDEV's added control options, allowing you to change system software and hardware settings, even if you add new hardware. And since each of these modules was loaded from disk only when needed, they didn't consume precious RAM space.

Well, it looks like Atari has taken a cue from Apple and designed their own version. The new XCONTROL Extensible control panel allows you to install new .CPX modules to control everything from the screen color to the cache settings on your hard drive. It doesn't matter how many control modules you add, the control panel will always take up the same amount of RAM space.

To use the new control panel, a little setup work is required. First, you need to put the XCONTROL.ACC file into your root directory (or load it via Multidesk). Next, you'll need to access the control panel and use the setup options to tell it where to look for the .CPX files. (This is a nice touch - you don't have to place all your files in the AUTO folder.) After that, you can either re-boot to load the .CPX extensions, or you can use the control panel's setup option to load (or unload) CPX modules immediately.

For those of you with only floppy drives, the control panel has the option to automatically load some of the CPX modules into RAM, so that your floppy drive doesn't need to be accessed when you access those modules. You can also set the name and color of the individual modules.

Once the CPX modules are loaded into the menu, you really begin to get a taste of the power this new control panel offers. There are CPX extensions for color, sound, modem, printer, and general features. These modules support all of the features in your machine, from the 520ST all the way up to the new TT computers.

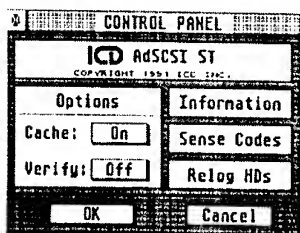


If your system has the ability, you can adjust the stereo sound, choose from a palette of 4096 colors, and switch the CPU speed from 16Mhz to 8Mhz and back again. With this new system, Atari doesn't have to re-write the control panel each time they come out with new features in their machines. Smart, real smart!

And there's more - third party hardware manufacturers can write custom CPX modules to control the features of their add-ons. ICD has already jumped on this bandwagon - they have CPX modules for both their AdSCSI host adapters and their AdSpeed 16Mhz upgrade. These modules allow you to do things such as switch the CPU speed, turn the write cache on or off, and provide you with a handy list of hard drive sense code errors. Handy.

Double Click software has already announced that they are planning a special package of CPX utility modules, including a CPX version of their ever-popular DC Formatter. They also mentioned that one of these CPX modules would be a game, a concept that Atari does not agree with.

Atari has stated that they want all CPX modules to be control- oriented, i.e., that they deal only with changing settings in TSR (terminate and stay-resident) software or in hardware peripherals and add-ons. The CPX system is not meant to replace desk accessories, but rather to help get rid of accessories whose sole purpose was to change hardware or TSR settings.



What ever CPX modules evolve into, it is clear that they represent a major evolution in the Atari's operating system, and hold a great deal of promise. The new control panel takes up about 50k of RAM, as opposed to the old version's 20k or so. However, it allows an ever-expanding amount of system control and power for that increase in RAM, and is, in this reviewer's opinion, worth every K.

Coming Next Month:

- ☒ Expose' Part II
- ☒ Dem bombs dem bombs; a complete(?) listing
- ☒ Mac vs. ST...Up Close and Personal
- ☒ Return of 'The Rumor Mill'
- ☒ And Much, Much, Much More

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